

Action resource worksheet 4



Learners' knowledge and skills¹

This worksheet is based on implementing a wealth model approach to adult literacy and numeracy tuition as set out in the **Guidelines for Good Adult Literacy Work** (NALA, 2012).

The wealth model approach

The wealth model is the simple idea that adult learners bring many different experiences and strengths into the class with them. A good tutor will use these experiences and strengths as a resource. They will respect the learner for what they have already done and achieved in their lives to date and regard their experience as a very good starting point for meeting new challenges.

Learning about a learner's experiences and knowledge helps to show where their strengths, goals and interests lie. Knowing their goals and interests means that the tutor can make tasks relevant and useful. This moves adult education away from 'merely useful knowledge' to giving and getting 'really useful knowledge' – the knowledge that learners need to change their lives for the better.

The wealth model in practice

Transformative learning is a way of making it possible for learners to take action and develop new perspectives on themselves, their families and wider society. Slowly, the tutors build evidence of the learner's ability. This ability is evident in the learner's portfolios and their increasing confidence. These contradict negative self-belief, and replace it with a positive and realistic one.

1 To accompany the report 'The wealth model in adult literacy: transformative learning in action'

Guidelines for good adult literacy work: Guideline 4

Students' knowledge and skills are vital for the effective organisation of adult literacy work. Students should have the opportunity to be involved in all aspects of provision.

This guideline asks tutors and organisations to be actively involved in the organisation and in how provision is organised. Adult learners are not empty vessels waiting to be filled by the tutor's knowledge. They are already experts in their own experiences and have a unique mix of learning strengths. While it is in the power of the adult literacy service to involve the learners in all aspects of provision, it is in the power of the tutor to draw on the knowledge and skills of the learner to good effect.

Top tips

- **Draw on the learner's prior knowledge and experience appropriately.**

Good practice in working with adults is to establish what the learners already know about a subject. The learner can connect new learning to previous experience, and see how and where new knowledge can be applied. They are guided to transform information into knowledge and shown how to access relevant information.

- **Work with the interests of the learner.**

The challenge for the tutor is to assess how to combine the interests and goals of the learner with their ability for a task. The impact is that the learner's frame of reference about their ability to learn is transformed. Understanding what the learner is interested in, or their goals, helps the tutor make the teaching more relevant to the learner. This is the social practice model in action.

- **Work with the life circumstances of the learner.**

For many learners life tasks and responsibilities resume when they leave the classroom. Respecting the life circumstances of the learner allows the learner to relax, knowing that they can meet the demands on their family or other responsibilities without jeopardising their place on a programme.

- **Extend the learning outside of the classroom.**

One way learning can be extended is by assessing the extent to which the learner is comfortable using technology and by identifying the technical equipment learners have at home that will support their learning. Extending learning outside of the classroom enables the learner to become more fluent. The more practice a learner can do the more they learn. This can overcome the problem of insufficient time in the class or for attending class.

My three top tips on how I draw on the knowledge and skills of the learner to good effect:

1.

2.

3.

The 'Not Like School' checklist

Ways my classroom is 'Not Like School'	Check
It is an informal, relaxed learning environment	
We agree ground rules and everyone understands the reason for a ground rule.	
There is peer teaching and learning	
There is mutual respect	
I see learners as adults with prior experience, knowledge and skills to draw on	
The prior skills and experience of the learner can be relevant	
I learn from the group	
The advantages of going for certification are identified	
I see myself as a facilitator of learning	
I create collaborative classrooms	
I know how the curriculum is negotiated	
I provide critical literacy and numeracy skills so people can read the word to read the world	



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National Adult Literacy Agency
Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh

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